

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 06810 060912Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 INSE-00 /016 W
-----123815 060915Z /15

P R 060833Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1126
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 6810

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: ESTIMATE OF ELIGIBLES
FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS AND PROPOSED NEW TRANSIT CENTER

REF: A. STATE 54108 B. BANGKOK 3346

1. WE ARE PLEASED TO LEARN FROM REF A THAT THE DEPARTMENT IN EARLY APRIL MAY RECOMMEND A FURTHER PAROLE WHICH WOULD INCLUDE LAND CAMP REFUGEES IN THAILAND. WHILE WE COULD PRODUCE BY MID-MARCH AN UNSCIENTIFIC ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF THAI INLAND CAMP REFUGEES WHO MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE FOR SUCH A PAROLE, WE WOULD PREFER, IN THE INTERESTS OF GREATER ACCURACY, TO DELAY THE REPORTING DATE UNTIL MARCH 24. SEVERAL HUNDRED OF OUR FILES ARE CURRENTLY UPCOUNTRY, AND WILL REMAIN THERE UNTIL INS OFFICERS FINISH PROCESSING AT MID-MONTH. PLEASE CONFIRM WHETHER THE MARCH 24 DATE IS ACCEPTABLE.

2. WE RECALL THE RECENT ASSURANCES THAT WASHINGTON VISITORS AND EMBASSY OFFICIALS HAVE GIVEN WHILE URGING THE RTG IN THE NEAR TERM, WE AND OTHER COUNTRIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO ABSORB BOAT REFUGEES ALREADY IN CAMPS AND THOSE WHO WILL ARRIVE IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEW THAT A RESIDUAL BOAT CASE LOAD OF ABOUT 6600 INDICATES THAT NUMBERS UNDER IPP-78 WILL SOON BE EXHAUSTED
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ILLUSTRATES THE NECESSITY FOR A RAPID FOLLOW-ON PROGRAM. WE MUST AVOID THE PILING UP OF REFUGEES IN THE CAMPS IN ORDER TO PRESERVE CONTINUING THAI ACCEPTANCE.

3. IN REGARD TO THE DEPARTMENT'S PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ICEM-RUN TRANSIT AND HOLDING CENTER IN THAILAND FOR UP TO 5000 REFUGEES, WE FORESEE SEVERAL

PROBLEMS. PRIMARILY, THE THAI WANT THESE INDIVIDUALS OUT OF THAILAND AS SOON AS THEY ARE APPROVED. SHIFTING THEM FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER IN-COUNTRY WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO MEET THEIR CONCERNS. GIVEN PRESENT MOI MOOD OF FRUSTRATION MOI SENIOR OFFICERS COULD REACT STRONGLY TO ANY SUCH APPROACH SINCE THEY WOULD RIGHTLY VIEW IT AS AN ATTEMPT TO FINESSE THEIR OWN PROPOSAL THAT U.S. OPEN AT LEAST A FEW SMALL RECEPTION CENTERS IN U.S. TO HOLD APPROVED BOAT CASE REFUGEES WHILE WAITING SPONSORSHIP. (WE ARE CONSTANTLY QUERIED ON THIS BY MOI.) IN A PRACTICAL VEIN BELIEVE ALSO IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THAI WOULD BE LOATHE TO PROVIDE THE SPACE NECESSARY FOR A LARGE HOLDING FACILITY AND WOULD NOT IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES AGREE TO BRING SEVERAL THOUSAND REFUGEES INTO BANGKOK AREA TO WAIT SEVERAL MONTHS FOR DEPARTURE.

4. SECONDLY, WE QUESTION THE CAPABILITY OF LOCAL ICEM LEADERSHIP TO MANAGE SUCH A CENTER. AS WE HAVE MENTIONED IN PREVIOUS REPORTING, WE WOULD NOT WANT TO GET INTO THE DIRECT MANAGEMENT OF IT OURSELVES. THIRDLY, THE RTG PRESSURE ON US FOR RAPID MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES HAS SO FAR BEEN ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN THE BOAT CASE CAMPS. EXCEPT FOR SIKHIU, WHICH HOUSES VIETNAMESE THAT THE THAI WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE AROUND ANYWHERE, THERE SO FAR HAS BEEN NO SPECIFIC PRESSURE TO MOVE REFUGEES RAPIDLY OUT OF THE INLAND CAMPS.

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5. IF THERE IS EVER A MAJOR ONGOING U.S. PROGRAM WITH A SUBSTANTIAL MONTHLY OUTFLOW, HOWEVER, WE MAY WISH TO RECONSIDER OUR POSITION AT THAT TIME.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, PAROLE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO06810
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780100-0496
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803104/aaaadkmv.tel
Line Count: 99
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 233b7bb8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 54108
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3112075
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: ESTIMATE OF ELIGIBLES FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS AND PROPOSED NEW TRANSIT CENTER
TAGS: SREF, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/233b7bb8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014